

## White Sallee at Powlett River

On 24 April 2014, I visited some White Sallee *Eucalyptus pauciflora* subsp. *pauciflora* growing close to the coast near the Powlett River, in South Gippsland. This locality is west-north-west of Wonthaggi, and is accessed by the Mouth of Powlett (MoP) Road, which joins the Bass Highway east of Kilcunda. This visit came about because, when browsing some older copies of *The Victorian Naturalist*, I came across an interesting article by Pat Carolan about White Sallee (or lowland Snow Gum) in this area (Carolan 1983). As I was planning a trip along the Bass Highway, I decided to make a short diversion to see if I could find this rather remote remnant.

Carolan reported that specimens including fruits were later collected from some of these trees by Dr Pauline Ladiges and Jann Williams of the University of Melbourne Botany Department. A few trees appeared to be hybrids.

These two researchers subsequently published a paper on this Powlett River population, along with 19 other *E. pauciflora* populations (Williams and Ladiges 1985), in which they examined and compared the morphology of leaves, buds and fruits of adult specimens and also of seedling characters grown from germinated seed. Detailed mathematical analysis elucidated the variation between the populations. This showed that the trees from Powlett River (and Cape Schanck) were the most variable in terms of adult characteristics. Analysis of the seedling characters showed that they were split between three groups, indicating character segregation and hence hybridisation in this area (possibly with Narrow-leaved Peppermint *E. radiata*).

During my visit I managed to find two patches of the White Sallee growing together with dense Coast Tea-tree *Leptospermum laevigatum*, Coast Banksia *Banksia integrifolia*, Coast Wattle *Acacia longifolia* subsp. *sophorae*, Austral Bracken *Pteridium esculentum*, and some Prickly Tea-tree *L. continentale*. These patches were 1.2–1.3 km to the east along the MoP

Road from the bridge over the Powlett River, and both occurred mainly in the 20–30 m wide strip between the road and the private property fence to the south (coastal) side. I did not venture into the private property to determine the full extent of both patches. The road at this point is about 500 m from the beach.

In one patch there were about eight White Sallee trees with some up to 10 m tall and up to 25 cm diameter at breast height (Fig. 1); but most were smaller and of similar height to the 5–6 m Coast Tea-tree and Coast Banksia. These trees had typical White Sallee gum-type bark i.e. striated grey and creamy, as well as relatively large (18 cm x 3 cm), shiny leathery leaves with longitudinal venation and tiny hooks on the ends. Younger twigs were slightly glaucous, and did not carry any buds. The fruit was fairly similar to that depicted in Costermans (2006) with slightly sunken discs.

A short distance to the west was another patch where I counted six White Sallee trees, ranging in diameter from 15 to 40 cm. Here, a couple of trees had smaller, less leathery leaves in which the longitudinal venation was not so prominent; the branchlets were not glaucous and some had a heavy bud crop with umbels of up to 13 flower buds. The fruit was also different from that of the first patch of trees, being more cup-shaped and with very short pedicels.

About 200 m to the east of these sites (the end of the MoP Road) was the western boundary of the Wonthaggi Desalination Plant and Ecological Reserve. Some Rough-barked Manna Gum *E. viminalis* subsp. *pryoriana* was growing along this fenced boundary. No other eucalypt species was found in my limited search.

In conclusion, the variation which I observed in the White Sallee leaves and fruits in the Powlett River area was clearly supported by the results of Williams and Ladiges (1985) as briefly described above. It is good to see that this White Sallee remnant patch—about 60 km from the next nearest patch (Cape Schanck)—is doing

well (although slightly mixed up!), 31 years after it was first noted by an FNCV member.

#### References

- Carolan P (1983) Coastal *Eucalyptus pauciflora* in South Gippsland. *The Victorian Naturalist* **100**, 178.  
Costermans L (2006) *Trees of Victoria and adjoining areas*. 6 edn. (Costermans Publishing; Frankston, Victoria)

Williams J and Ladiges PY (1985) Morphological variation in Victorian, lowland populations of *Eucalyptus pauciflora* Sieb.ex Spreng. *Proceedings of the Royal Society Victoria* **97**, 31–48.

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Fig. 1. White Sallee photographed at Powlett River